

CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method for exchanging certain profile information over a network, the profile information being stored in a database and pertaining to a plurality of registered users, said method comprising the acts of:
- 5 (a) identifying a particular one of the registered users with which a requesting user desires to exchange profile information with, the requesting user also being one of the registered users;
- (b) informing the identified registered user via the network that the requesting user
- 10 has requested to exchange profile information;
- (c) receiving instructions from the identified registered user via the network on whether to permit the exchange of profile information with the requesting user; and
- (d) thereafter exchanging profile information between the requesting user and the identified registered user from the database via the network in accordance with the
- 15 instructions.
2. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 1, wherein the profile information is exchanged only to the extent permitted by the instructions.
- 20 3. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.
4. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 1, wherein said exchanging comprises:
- 25 (d1) identifying first profile information in the database pertaining to the identified registered user; and
- (d2) sending the first profile information from the database to the requesting user via the network.
- 30 5. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 4, wherein said exchanging further comprises:

(d1) identifying second profile information in the database pertaining to the requesting user; and

(d2) sending the second profile information from the database to the identified registered user via the network.

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6. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 1, wherein said method further comprises:

(e) subsequently displaying the profile information associated with the identifier registered user for use by the requestor, the profile information being displayed in a predetermined configuration regardless of the particular identified registered user.

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7. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein the predetermined configuration with which said displaying (e) displays the profile information is in a business card format.

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8. In a network-based information exchange system, a computer-implemented method for exchanging electronic information in a controlled manner, said method comprising the acts of:

(a) designating, by a requestor, a requested party with which an information exchange is desired;

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(b) requesting, by the requestor, an information exchange with the requested party; and

(c) thereafter exchanging electronic information between the requestor and the requested party over a network to the extent permitted by the requested party.

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9. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 8, wherein the electronic information being exchanged comprises profile information.

10. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 9, wherein said method further comprises:

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(d) subsequently displaying the profile information associated with the requested party for use by the requestor, and

wherein the profile information is displayed in a predetermined configuration regardless of the particular requested party.

11. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 10, wherein the predetermined
5 configuration with which said displaying (d) displays the profile information is in a business card format.

12. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 9, wherein the profile
10 information comprises name, address, telephone number, and electronic mail address.

13. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 12, wherein the profile
10 information further comprises business name and title.

14. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 12, wherein said designating (a)
15 comprises entering at least an electronic mail address for the requested party.

15. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 9,
wherein the profile information for the registered parties is stored on a remote server
machine, and the requestor operates at a requestor's local machine and the requested party
20 operates at a requested party's local machine, and

wherein said exchanging (c) causes the requestor's local machine to receive the
profile information for the requested party from the remote server machine to store the
profile information on the requestor's local machine for subsequent use.

25 16. A method for accessing a database of information across a network, said method comprising the acts of:

(a) registering users with a central system to store user information;

(b) receiving a request from a particular requesting user seeking to receive user
information from the central system for a particular registered user;

30 (c) determining whether the particular registered user agrees to release of the user information associated with the particular registered user; and

(d) supplying the user information associated with the particular registered user from the central system to the particular requesting user to the extent permitted by the particular registered user.

- 5 17. A method as recited in claim 16, wherein said determining (c) comprises:
- (c1) sending an authorization inquiry to the particular registered user;
 - (c2) receiving an authorization response from the particular registered user in response to the authorization inquiry; and
 - (c3) examining the received authorization response to determine whether the
- 10 particular registered user agrees to release of the user information associated with the particular registered user to the particular requesting user.
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18. A system for managing the exchange of dynamic information pertaining to persons, said system comprising:

15 a system server that stores profile information for a plurality of registered users, manages the controlled exchange of portions of the profile information between requestors and requestees, and facilitates the update to the profile information to the requested users whom have previously obtained the profile information being updated;

20 a requestor's computer system capable of coupling to said server system through a network, said requestor's computer system selects one of the registered users to be a requestee for an exchange request; issues to said system server an exchange request for the profile information pertaining to the requestee, and stores the profile information pertaining to the requestee when said system server forwards the profile information pertaining to the requestee from said system server to said requestor's computer system; and

25 a requestee's computer capable of coupling to said server system through a network, said requestee's computer system receives a permission request from said server system to permit an exchange of the profile information with the requestor, and sends a permission response to said server system indicating whether the request exchange of profile information is permitted.

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19. A method for maintaining information stored in a remote database, the remote database includes information pertaining to a plurality of registered users, said method comprising the acts of:

(a) modifying pre-established information for a particular registered user stored in a local database of a local computing device;

(b) updating the remote database based on the modifications to the pre-established information;

(c) determining those of the registered users that have previously stored the pre-established information for the particular registered user in local databases of local computing devices associated with such registered users; and

(d) updating the local databases of the local machines associated with the registered users that have previously stored the pre-established information for the particular registered user, said updating being based on the modifications to the pre-established information.

20. An information management and distribution system, comprising:

a system server that stores contact information for registered users and stores corporate contact information for business entities having employees;

an administrator module that registers a business entity with said server system by providing the corporate contact information for the business entity, and said administrator controls registration of the employees of the business entity; and

user modules that enable registered users to distribute their contact information to other registered users by way of said system server, the other registered users receive the contact information that has been distributed with said user modules, and in the case where the registered user is one of the employees of the business entity, the contact information that is distributed includes the corporate contact information.

21. A system as recited in claim 20, wherein said administrator module can disable use of the employee contact information for one or more of the previously registered employees.

22. In an information management and exchange system having a plurality of registered users with each user having their own profile information, a method for controlling usability

of previously received profile information for a registered user, said method comprising the acts of:

- (a) selecting one of the registered users to be disabled;
- (b) identifying those of the registered users whom have previously received profile information from the selected registered user; and
- (c) disabling use of the profile information for the selected registered user by those of the registered users whom have previously received the profile information from the selected registered user.

23. A method as recited in claim 22, wherein said method further comprises:

- (d) issuing a notification to one or more of the registered users.

24. A method for maintaining and distributing contact information for a business entity and employees of the business entity, said method comprising the acts of:

- (a) creating contact information for a business entity;
- (b) storing the contact information for the business entity on a system server;
- (c) creating contact information for employees of the business entity, the contact information for the employees including some individual information and including or referencing the contact information for the business entity;
- (d) storing the contact information for the employees of the business entity on the system server; and
- (e) thereafter distributing the contact information for one or more of the employees to one or more recipients.

25. A method as recited in claim 24, wherein the contact information references or comprises additional information.

26. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein the additional information includes at least one of: a graphic object, a text object, a video object, or a link thereto.

27. A method as recited in claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

(f) displaying the distributed contact information for the one or more employees to the one or more recipients.

28. A method as recited in claim 27, wherein said displaying (f) displays the contact information in a common format regardless of the employee.

29. A method as recited in claim 28, wherein the common format is representative of an electronic business card format.

30. A method as recited in claim 27, wherein the recipients are able to contact the employee associated with the distributed contact information by selecting an available communication mechanism.

31. A method as recited in claim 30, wherein the available communication mechanisms are those communication mechanisms that have been authorized by the contact information being displayed.

32. A method as recited in claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:
(f) disabling use by the one or more recipients of the previously distributed contact information for at least one of the employees.

33. A method as recited in claim 32, wherein said method further comprises:
(g) visually notifying the one or more recipients that use of the previously distributed contact information for the at least one of the employees is no longer available.

34. A graphical user interface presented on a display device, comprising:

a card display area for displaying a contact card, the contact card including contact information for the user.

35. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 34, wherein the contact card displayed pertains to the user.

36. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 34, wherein said graphical user interface further comprises:

5 a selector that allows a user to select one of a plurality of contact cards,
wherein after selection of one of the contact cards, the selected contact card is displayed in said card display area.

37. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 34, wherein said graphical user interface further comprises:

10 an additional information designation area that indicates whether there are any additional cards associated with the contact card being displayed.

38. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 37, wherein the any additional cards are container cards.

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39. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 38, wherein the contact card and the any additional cards have a common format.

40. A graphical user interface as recited in claim 38, wherein the any additional cards include at least one data object.

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